the matter of advising Government in regard to internal communications. These bodies are going to be set up according to the rules published in the Gazette. We should have a set number of divisional boards and a central board. The proposals are that in the Divisional Boards, S. M. P. A. Members of the taluks concerned should be associated with the Peishkars, Tahsildars and Public Works Department officers in drawing up their programme and making their recommendations in the matter of internal communications; and similarly it is proposed to have a Central Board in Trivandrum on which will be non-official members of the Legislative Council and a limited number of officials. If and when these bodies are established it will be the first step in associating the non-official public with the Government agencies, I do not know, but possibly for other things too representative agencies may in course of time evolve themselves, but when such bodies do evolve themselves I consider they will not be of the type of District Boards and Taluk Boards in British India. Therefore I would suggest to you to go into these circumstances very carefully before you make any further suggestions on the subject to Government.

**18. Promulgation of a Tea Thefts Prevention Regulation on the lines of the Rubber Thefts Prevention Regulation, IX of 1087.**

MR. A. R. ST. GEORGE (*Member, Central Travancore Planters' Association*) requested that Government should introduce legislation for the prevention of tea thefts on the same lines as the Rubber Thefts Prevention Regulation, IX of 1087, under which all dealers in rubber had to take out licences. The onus of proof in the case of a theft of tea lay at present on the Superintendent of the estate from which the tea was stolen, but if a regulation was brought into force, the onus would lie on the dealer. The necessity for this legislation, the member urged, was apparent for the following reasons :—

(1) Thefts of tea from factories were increasing yearly and had reached serious proportions;

(2) It was very difficult to prosecute suspected persons successfully owing to the difficulty of identifying tea. Stolen tea was generally loose tea, thefts of packed tea with the estates' name on it were very rare, but were known.

The suggestion of the member was that all dealers in tea should be required to take out licences just as dealers in rubber were and that they should also be required to keep books showing whence the tea they sold was procured. The Magistracy and the Police could be empowered to inspect these books occasionally and check the figures. Thefts would then be obiously rendered more difficult as the dealer would find it difficult to account for any large unvouched for quantity of tea found on a surprise visit by the police.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. St. George, I see that the same suggestion as you now put forward on behalf of the Central Travancore Planters' Association was also made on a previous occasion by the representative of the Central Travancore Planters' Association. That was in 1922. What you now propose is legislation effected on the

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lines of the Rubber Thefts Prevention Regulation to safeguard tea, that is to say, the licencing of dealers in tea and thereby the practicability of scrutinising tea produced and tea illicitly obtained. I should be inclined to suggest that the Planters' Association should bring forward a private bill through the non-official member on the Legislative Council That possibly will be the earliest way of moving in the matter.

This matter was examined seven years ago. It has not come to anything. But I shall have the question studied *de novo*. Meanwhile I shall ask you to ask your Association to consider the propriety of having a private bill introduced in the Legislative Council.

**19. Legislation to penalise the manufacture and sale of spurious and adulterated tea.**

CAPTAIN M. F. SHORE (*Member, South Travancore Planters' Association*) said that the sale of imitation and adulterated tea had increased throughout India during recent years and the latest information put the annual sale at 10 million pounds. As far as he knew, the majority of this colossal amount was produced in South India, much of it in Virudanagar some 75 miles from the Travancore frontier and much in Travancore itself near Kottayam. The latter place treated the leaves of jungle plants which were not related to tea in any way. Many of the articles produced looked so much like tea that the average buyer was deceived and the poorer consumer, attracted by the low price at which this concoction was sold, purchased what he thought was tea but had no food value whatever. Some packets or tins were marked 'imitation tea' but the illiterate purchaser was not able to know this.

At least one tea producing company which used to sell its cheaper grades to small dealers for local consumption had been forced to abandon such sale as it was found that this tea was being adulterated and sold as the genuine article sometimes below the cost of production. This company now only sold locally in small quantities its most expensive grades with the result that its local sales had dropped considerably and the poorer purchaser could not get the genuine article at a price commensurate with his means. Samples of rubbish tea had been analysed and the ingredients could be forwarded to Government, if necessary. With the annual increase in production of spurious tea, the question was becoming serious for the planting industry and it was for it that he now spoke, but what was more important was the danger to the consumer who drank the tea.

The member therefore urged upon the Government the need for legislation to prevent or at least to penalise the manufacture and sale of rubbish tea. The Governments of the Punjab, the Central Provinces and Bengal had prescribed standards of quality for tea under their Food Adulteration Acts and the Governments of Bombay, Burma and Behar and Orissa were considering the question, while the Government of Madras had been approached by the U. P. A. S. I. in the matter and it was hoped that early steps would be taken by that Government to meet this pernicious practice.

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